

Advise on the development of a Learning Technologies Strategy at the Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck

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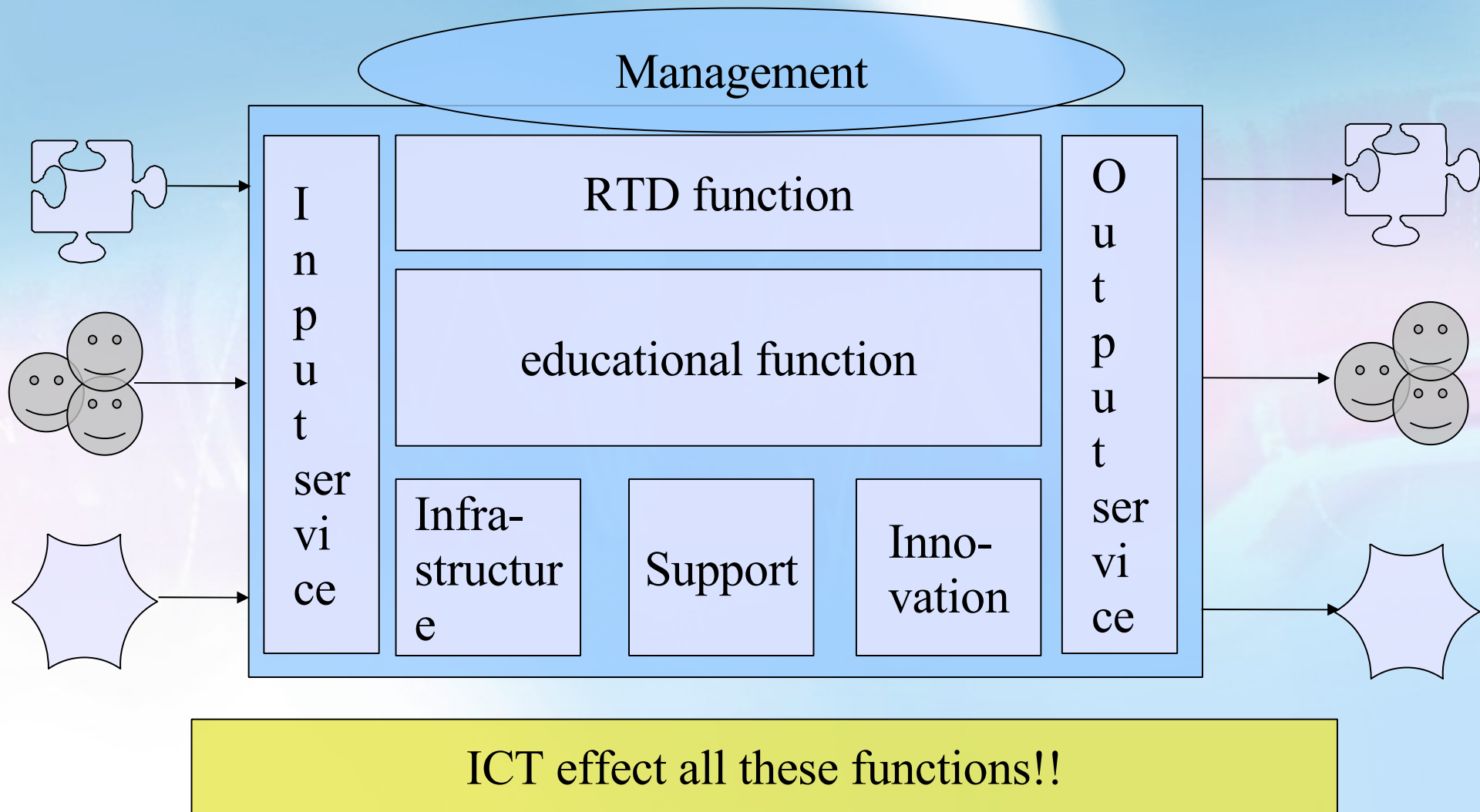
Context

- Period of change:
 - a. BaMa
 - b. Reorganisation
 - c. e-Learning/e-Teaching agenda
- Uni Innsbruck is an early campus-wide user of an LMS (blackboard)
- However: 'times they are a-changing': new educational approaches, new demands, new technological possibilities, new organisation, new structure of the curriculum, ...
- Need for a strategy on 'e-learning'

Approach

1. Desk study on learning technologies describing the European context: state-of-the-art, trends and critical issues, including analysis of other universities strategic plans
2. Consultation with top-management
3. Interviews with academic staff

University as a 'Knowledge Factory'



Major Conclusions

- Majority of staff applies e-learning at rather basic level (course info, share lecture notes/powerpoints)
- Large gap between strategic opportunities for e-learning as identified by a relatively small group of staff and neutrality or indifference towards e-learning by a larger group.
- Deployment of e-learning depends largely on enthusiastic individuals instead of institutional policy (incl. reward mechanisms)

Conclusions (continued)

- Deployment of e-learning differs considerably between faculties, departments and individual lecturers (opportunity for peer-learning)
- Widespread apprehension about management's motives (cost reduction instead of improvement of quality of teaching and learning) for e-learning
- There is ample room to experiment with the use of new technologies to innovate teaching and learning

Consequence

- e-learning is still perceived and organised as something separate from teaching and learning
- The major driver for European Universities to invest in e-learning:
to make their education more accessible, more effective, more efficient and more attractive and to explore new markets (lifelong learning, integration of learning in the workplace, ...)
- In the current context of the UI, it will be problematic to realise this massive step forward to innovate teaching and learning and to explore new markets.

Recommendations

1

e-Learning at UI should move beyond its present *logistical* support focus and should start *adding substantial value to the teaching and learning process*, including blended learning and (a limited number of) distance learning courses

2

First successes come from intrinsically motivated individuals, but further expansion of e-learning will require *incentive mechanisms* for staff to promote the effective use of new technologies in teaching

Rewards initiatives based on proven success; define such success criteria (eg effective use of e-learning in foundational courses with large number of students)

3

Within the university there is a strong need to establish *common ground* on e-learning:

Need for a structured assessment and transfer of good practices and experience throughout the university, complemented with the advise of external experts (define criteria for good practices, an assessment procedure and a funding mechanism)

4

Establish a *support facility* to help faculty to use and design effective, efficient and attractive e-learning courses

(supplement to the current support on the use of the technical infrastructure)

5

For the time being Blackboard should remain the preferred LMS at UI.

At the same time the Uni should start to explore and experiment with the use of future e-learning infrastructures that will replace Blackboard in a few years

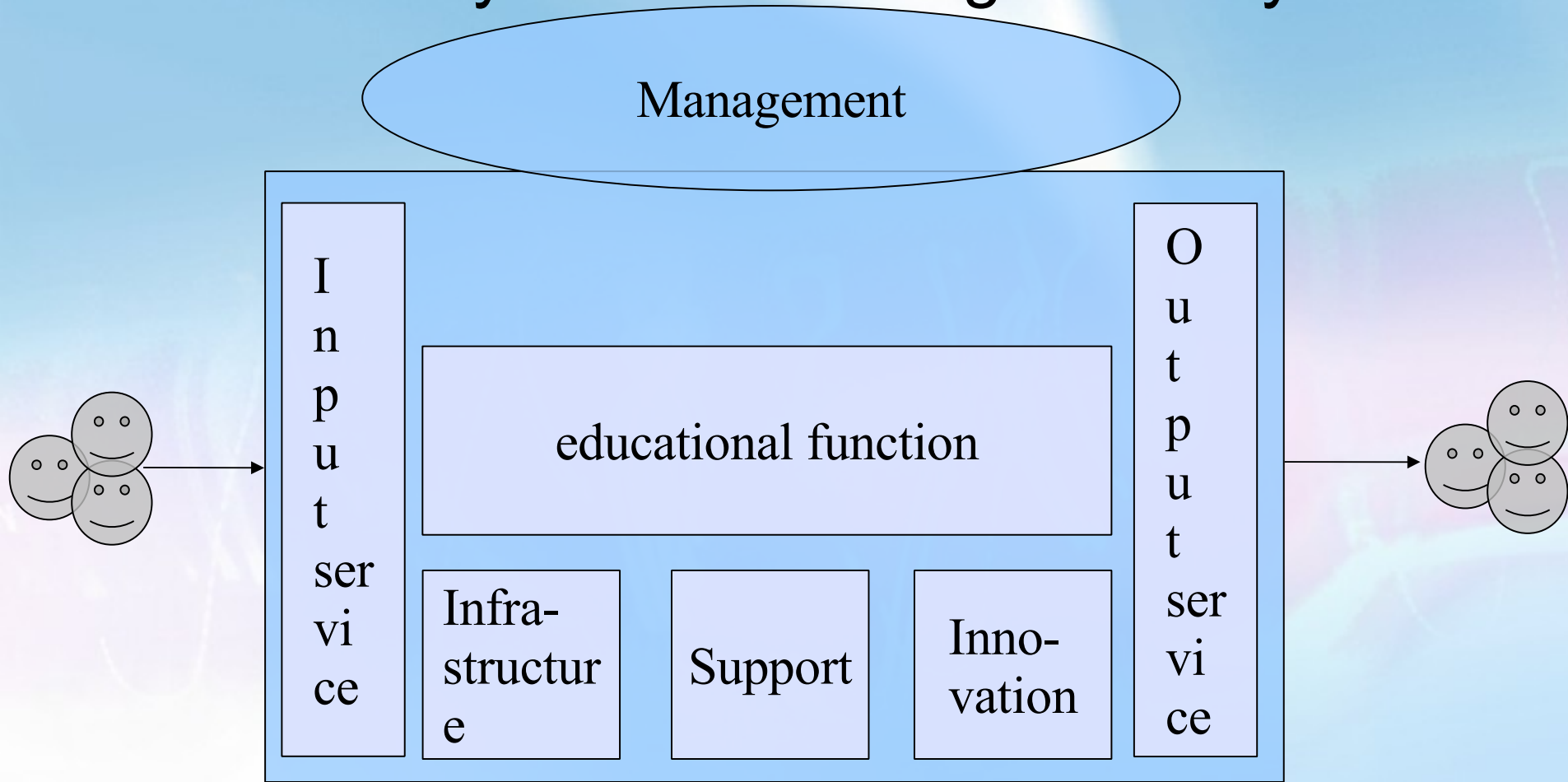
(mainly standards based, interoperable e-learning infrastructures based on Service Oriented Architectures)

6

Operational e-learning use and Innovation and RTD work in e-Learning should be distinguished as much as possible: separate infrastructures, separate management, support and funding (regular versus innovation funds)

Also, stimulate high-quality experiments with new technologies in education, but be clear about its experimental status to staff and students, and use regular assessment criteria for the quality of RTD (e.g. peer-reviewed publications, impact and dissemination measures)

University as a 'Knowledge Factory'



Thank You!

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